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## **Review of Gregor Geiger, Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der judäischen Wüste**

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**Abstract:** The function of the participle within the Hebrew tense system has considerably changed between biblical and postbiblical Hebrew. This investigation studies the participle in the Hebrew manuscripts from the Judaean Desert, its formation, its usage, and its meaning, compared with those in other Hebrew traditions and dialects, especially the language of the Hebrew Bible. The biblical Hebrew tense system continues to be used in the Scrolls, while there is a clear difference between the tense system of the Scrolls and that of mishnaic Hebrew. This fact allows us to draw conclusions in the field of language studies; but it also provides us with a piece of the puzzle in our understanding of the sociology and religion of the Qumran community.

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**Gregor Geiger**

***Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der judäischen Wüste***

Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 101

Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. xvii + 591 + CD-ROM.  
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This book originated as a dissertation (written in German) that was submitted (in Hebrew translation) under the auspices of Professor Steve Fassberg at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2009. Gregor Geiger presents a carefully edited revision of his work, with a summary in English.

The aim of this study is to describe more exactly the relationships between Biblical Hebrew, the language of the Qumran scrolls, and Mishnaic Hebrew. Geiger argues that within the Hebrew tense system the function of the participle undergoes significant changes between Biblical and Postbiblical Hebrew. To this purpose, the author studies the participle as used in the Hebrew manuscript fragments, both biblical and nonbiblical, from the Dead Sea Scrolls. He also discusses scrolls from other sites in the Judean Desert (mostly legal documents found in its southern part, the language of which differs from Qumran Hebrew). Even though it was not found at Qumran, the Damascus Document from the Cairo Genizah is part of the study as well.

Geiger deals with all participial forms in this corpus, analyzing their formation, usage, and meaning. In addition, he compares these forms with those in other relevant Hebrew traditions, such as the Masoretic (Tiberian) Text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Mishnah,

and ancient translations. The phenomena are described synchronically and, when possible, diachronically. By means of the latter, differences between the transmitted forms of a given text allow one to draw conclusions concerning the meaning or the function of the words or forms.

The chapter “Morphology and Orthography” analyzes the formation and spelling of the participle as attested in Qumran Hebrew in comparison with other Hebrew traditions. The participles are listed alphabetically by root, in the order of the verbal stems (*binyanim*) in which they occur, with strong verbs first and weak verbs second. Since the orthography of the biblical texts of the Qumran scrolls shows many differences with the one of the Masoretic Text, the listing provides statistical information as well, mostly with reference to plene or defective spelling, and notes in which manuscripts many of the rare forms are attested.

As to the formation קוּטֵל, for example, one can observe that the later a text is, the more likely it is to feature plene spellings. However, this general rule is complicated by the fact that a particular form of the text (later to be called Masoretic Text) developed during the course of the textual history, and it became influential on the shape of Hebrew literature. This development took place during the time when the Qumran Scrolls were written and seems to have been completed at the time of the Bar Kokhba revolution. In addition, a defective spelling in the consonantal text can also be interpreted as a verbal adjective (קִטֵּל); therefore, dubious cases such as these and others—such as forms that may be analyzed as participial forms (קִטֵּל) or as *qatal* forms—are marked typographically.

Geiger also considers phenomena without any direct link to the category of verbal stems, such as suffixed participles, the formal distinction between participial verbal and nominal forms, and, exhaustively, the morphological and orthographical differences in participial forms used in texts that have come down to us in parallel versions.

The chapter “Syntax” opens with a description of the participle on the phrase level (“Wortgruppenebene,” syntagm), which the author understands to mean a chain of morphemes and lexemes that function within a larger unit. A transitive participle may govern its object nominally (with a “genitive”), verbally (with an “accusative”), with a suffix, with a preposition, or with a construct state before a preposition. Various factors determine which is the case; they are all listed and illustrated with numerous examples.

Next follows a description of the participle on the clause level (“Satzebene”). The clause occurring most frequently is the simple participial clause, with the participle located in the second position in the clause. An interrogative pronoun is always at the beginning of a clause, and if the subject is a citation, it is found at the end. If the *thema* stands at the

beginning of a clause, then the participle is the *rhema*. Most of these clauses can be classified as circumstantial clauses, giving background information (mostly) to the preceding context. Normally this background action takes place simultaneously with the action of the foreground; contemporaneity to the past is rare in Qumran Hebrew. Other participial clauses dealt with include the clause structure *participle-subject*, which often functions as performative, the participial clause with the participle in the third (or fourth) place, a negated participial clause, a participial clause introduced by a conjunction, and periphrastic participial clauses (with a verbal form of the root הִיָּה). This final category is especially frequent in the Temple Scroll. Again, these categorizations are illustrated by appropriate examples.

The chapter entitled “Semantics” presents a semantic evaluation of the data collected in the previous two chapters. First, the meaning of the participle is described in relation to the system of verbal stems by presenting an extensive alphabetical arrangement of verbal roots found in the Qumran Scrolls that do not have, or do not *only* have, the paradigmatic participle of the corresponding stem if finite forms of the root are attested. Examples of such nonparadigmatic forms include other formations besides קוּטַל and קִטּוּל, participles of derived stems with the meaning of the *qal*, and roots that form participles that are either exceptionally frequent or exceptionally rare in the Qumran texts. The findings are not merely listed but also accompanied by carefully analyzed observations, yet it remains difficult to formulate general rules for certain formal or semantic categories. What can be said is that, in contrast to Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew, the formation of participles from nonverbal roots does not seem to be productive in Qumran Hebrew.

Second, the meaning of the participle is described in relation to the tense system. After noting the various functions ascribed in scholarly literature to the participle in Qumran Hebrew, Biblical Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, and Sirach (455–61), Geiger reviews the evidence available for identifying the place of the participle within the tense system of Qumran Hebrew. He comes to the conclusion that the participle itself expresses neither time (not even relatively) nor aspect, but it can, whatever its context, occur in every time frame and aspect. Past, anteriority, and punctual aspect are less frequent than contemporaneity or continuity, which may well be due to semantics—persons doing, suffering, or being something are usually mentioned if this action covers a certain period that is often contemporaneous with other events. As opposed to the use in Biblical Hebrew, the participial clause in Qumran Hebrew does not, as a rule, express contemporaneity with the past (a few instances in the Masoretic Text show that this usage seems to have been unfamiliar to the Masoretes, as they pointed some of these forms as *qatal*).

This is a welcome and well-organized study, fully cross-referenced, and with several summaries. The accompanying CD-ROM is of particular interest, since it contains a 231-page PDF file with several lists of useful background information. For example, the author systematically investigates the participial forms as found in both biblical and nonbiblical texts that are attested several times. If these forms differ, they are grouped in various categories in the sixth list. These categories prove very helpful for getting a picture of the observable changes. When possible, these differences are explained either as exegetical variants, scribal errors, contextual variants, orthographic variants, or the original reading.

Geiger's volume clearly demonstrates that there is no diachronic development in the formation and usage of participles within Qumran Hebrew: the Biblical Hebrew tense system as a whole is unchanged and continues to be used in Qumran (if one disregards 4QMMT, which is linguistically distinctive). There is, however, a clear difference between the tense systems of Qumran Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew, although the former is closer to the latter than to Biblical Hebrew. It therefore appears that the Qumran community aimed to revive and cultivate not only the biblical "spirit" but also the biblical language.